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NFAC 1324-81

10 March 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: DD/NFA  
C/NIC  
Assistant NIO/USSR-EE

SUBJECT: Senior Review Panel Comments on Draft Concept  
Paper and Terms of Reference for NIE 11/30-81:  
Soviet Objectives in Southwest Asia, dated  
3 March 1981

1. In the Panel's view, this is an extremely important NIE. It is the kind of wide-ranging, regional estimate that more than once we have urged in the past be undertaken on a priority basis, and we applaud it.

2. The draft paper is well conceived and thought out. Its scope is ambitious, to say the least, and it will take a skillful drafter to cover in two or three paragraphs some of the topics outlined. Nevertheless, as targets for brevity, such length guidelines are worthwhile. We offer the following comments with the objectives of sharpening the focus and clarifying other aspects of the Terms of Reference.

3. We assume that the new NIE will be coordinated with similar efforts dealing with the Persian Gulf-Arabian Peninsula-Horn of Africa region and presumably the NIO/NESA, and possibly the NIO/Africa, will be involved in the project.

4. The Terms of Reference do not appear to focus on US and Western interests mentioned at the end of the concept statement. Perhaps it is intended that they will be addressed in Section I, Introduction of the TOR. Moreover, the implications of likely or possible Soviet moves for the US and the West do not seem to be covered specifically, although the last part of Section VI--Likely

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Soviet Perception of US/West Responses--touches on the matter. We suggest a final Section VII pertaining more directly to policy implications for the US and the West.

5. We note that DIA will have overall drafting responsibilities. The present draft TOR seems to be heavily weighted on predominantly military contingencies; one of the problems may be to keep political contingencies in balance. Specifically:

a. Section VI, Likely Soviet Perception of US/West Responses, may need amplification particularly in treating Soviet efforts to foment anti-American sentiment in the area sufficient to forestall or make more difficult a US presence in the area. (Parenthetically, political opposition to the US/West seems to be more promising as a Soviet denial strategy than "military opposition" cited in Section VI.)

b. Similarly, as a matter of political interpretation, we note the draft papers seem to assume an identity of US and Western interests/responses throughout. We think this is insufficiently nuanced and believe the analysis should include possibilities of US/West divergencies, Soviet-inspired, or otherwise.

c. The draft TOR in referring to possible regime changes seems to consider only Iran (Section V). Certainly a change of regime is a possibility in the other countries treated, especially Iraq and Pakistan.

d. The draft TOR does not appear to consider from the point of view of Soviet objectives in the region the trade-offs inherent in weighing Soviet

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interests in Iran versus those in Iraq, and similarly  
with respect to Afghanistan versus Pakistan.

e. Should the reference in the TOR to  
"separatist movements, e.g., Baluchis, etc." go  
beyond the matter of local Baluchi presence in each  
country and consider the concept of a "greater  
Baluchistan"?

6. With respect to possible military contingencies  
addressed in Section VI:

a. Should not the possibility of a reversal  
of alliances/orientation on the part of Iraq be  
included?

b. A construction which considers Soviet  
perceptions of US/Western responses as part of  
the politico-military calculus assessing Soviet  
options, constraints and prospects might be a less  
awkward approach than separating the response factor  
(Section VI) from the option analysis (Section V).

c. Finally, the all-out invasion of Iran  
in a drive to the sea (and directly threatening the  
Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula) strikes us as  
being a vastly more serious Soviet move, in fact,  
a prelude to general global war, than the other  
possible contingencies listed. In this connection,  
the real strategic prize in the region is Saudi  
Arabia and the very brief reference to that key  
country in the TOR may not be adequate.

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d. The foregoing applies to a lesser degree to an all-out invasion of Pakistan. Such a Soviet move beyond a cross-border operation against Afghani bases in Pakistan would have a grave impact on Soviet-Indian relations and have perhaps even greater repercussions in China.

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